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ARTICLES: MOVIES IN MALTA
ORGANISED FILM GOING
AMERICAN LETTER
FILM IN CZECHOSLOVAKIA

CONTRIBUTORS: Herman Weinberg
Joseph Reeves
Evelyn Russell
Jiri Weiss
Brian Smith

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Movies in Malta

Lt. Brian Smith, the official cinematographer tells of his experiences

WHEN WE were approaching Malta last year there were some aboard who said we should find underground cinemas. I felt that could not be true, for balanced against the guaranteed safety of patrons, it was too costly a commercial hazard in the face of uncertain supply of films and uncertain duration of the war.

There were no public underground cinemas. But when we landed we found more than a dozen movies were showing, and there are still almost as many, though some of the best buildings have been destroyed.

The Island is only one-sixth the size of Greater London, but there are first-run, second-run and provincial houses, just as at home. Just as? Well, more or less!

Main differences are: performances are not continuous, consisting of a short or newsreel, half a feature, an intermission, then the rest of the feature.

Safety regulations permit chairs in gangways and a single balcony exit. In some houses, seats are numbered, but the blue pencilled scrawl on the red ticket is seldom legible, especially when the house lights aren't functioning. One gropes. Mosquitos bite.

Prices are 1s., 1s. 6d. and 2s. 4d. Boxes for parties cost less than 2s. 4d. per head. By West End standards the auditoria are small, the seats uncomfortable, the screens dim and the sound poor.

Yet there is a sense of adventure in going to the movies in Malta: how marvellous still to have cinemas! Maltese staffs have carried on very calmly and patiently: always reluctant

to close the doors or interrupt the show.

The policy regarding air raids has been one of commonsense, working well except on the sad occasion when—as you may have seen in the papers—a bomb fell among an audience watching the last reel of *North-West Mounted Police*.

During the most severe bombing, cinemas closed completely. In quieter times, a roof spotter watches for local danger, whereupon the projectionist switches off and the audience may go to a nearby shelter.

For a year, the only new films were shorts: Newsreels, M. of I. and British Council. These are also shown to members of the British Institute in their concert hall, on a Phillip's portable projector. Among the most popular features were: MUSICALS: *Balalaika*, *Serenade*, *Rosalie*, *Honolulu*, *The Great Waltz* and *Rhythm on the River*. COMEDIES: *The Great Dictator*, *It's in the Air*, *The Road to Singapore*, *A Chump at Oxford*, *Desire*, *Midnight*, and two or three Andy Hardys. DRAMAS: *Wuthering Heights*, *Destry Rides Again*, *Arise my Love* and *Algiers* (featuring Maltese Joseph Calleja as the patient detective).

Preference seems markedly for escapist films. War all around, and in the newsreels, is sufficient! Moreover, a film like *The Spy in Black* isn't too convincing, in present circumstances.

I have not heard any feature applauded, nor known one "get the bird", though *Stolen Life* was too slow and sentimental for a crowded house; so was *The Outsider*—a stiff, stagey picture. On the other hand, a typical

Lubitsch touch in *Desire* aroused quite a roar of approval.

Recently, we have had *Gaslight*, *Blood and Sand*, and *49th Parallel*, the latter being the most popular, I think, though *Gaslight* seemed to me the best of the three.

I've been especially interested in shorts, because the war has so greatly enhanced their status. *London Scrapbook*, *Workers and Warfronts No. 1*, *Ferry Pilot*, *Special Despatch*, *Target for Tonight*, *Green Girdle* and *The Architects of England* at once spring to mind.

Cold indeed is the reaction to prosaic, non-topical subjects like *Western Waterways* and *The Story of the Apple*. Maltese audiences at the British Institute are certainly too movie sophisticated for such pedestrian stuff; it is doubtful if the more simple folk could follow the commentary, whilst as for the Services—comment is with restraint withheld!

Producers of shorts might bear in mind not only the language difficulty, but also the fact that comparatively indistinct sound renders strong, coherent visuals essential.

The interval in the middle of the feature is justified here, now, because it enables one projector to be dispersed. Yet the custom is older than the war and is general, I'm told, in New Zealand and South Africa. Some say it is necessary to save the audience from eye-strain. (This opinion was expressed by Arnold Bennett in his *Journal*). Others more candidly admit the main beneficiary to be the bar. This intermission is usually greeted with muffled groans, but if it is wanted by a majority, films should be so designed, as *Turksib* was designed for showing in single reels. The abrupt break usually flings the sub-title INTERMISSION into a crescendo of drama or comedy, killing the movie stone dead for 15 minutes, from which it does not always recover.

One final impression: just as there have been no new movies, so have there been no new gramophone records for these intervals. Had I ever liked Harry Roy's band, or the tune or the lyric of "Gertie the Girl with the Gong", I'd have had my moneysworth from that disk alone.

Yorkshire Enterprise.

THE third year of the war sees the cinema activities of the Bradford Civic Playhouse in no way curtailed, and in some ways improved, although anxiety as to supply and policy is still considerable.

We planned a season of at least six Sunday film shows, of which two are already over. In October we showed *Nanook of the North*, and a most interesting programme of short films from the National Film Library; and in November a revival of *Escape Me Never*, with a programme of British Council shorts, arranged in conjunc-

tion with the British Council and the local International Centre. We have booked *Pygmalion* for another British Council show, and *The Old Maid* for a later date, and are planning a Yugoslavian film evening for March or April.

For a Society which has specialised in continental films for years these are unusual programmes, and bring up the cause of our greatest anxiety. How long can we continue with this policy, and how compete with the commercial theatre with a changed policy? Our Society shows films to the public

nearly every alternate week, and is the only cinema in a very large area still showing continental films. To our audience revivals are not only for the second, but often for the third or fourth time, and exhaustion point is very quickly reached. We find that while the audiences during the week keep up their numbers well, and more and more people are learning to appreciate the best continental films, the Sunday audiences of the connoisseurs are dwindling. Over the past six or seven years we have given them so much that there is nothing they haven't seen! The new Sunday audience prefers revivals of the best British or American films, accompanied by the first-rate shorts and documentaries which are not to be

seen in the commercial cinema, and our policy has had to change to suit their tastes—and also, because of the much higher prices asked for continental film rentals, which remains a sore point.

Recent successes in the weekly shows have been *Fantasia* in the complete version, and *Dangerous Moonlight*. Films booked for weekly showings for the next two months are *Les Perles de la Couronne*, *Citizen Kane*, *The Last Night*, and *Jeannie*—French, American, Russian and English.

May I add, also, that our system of half-price vouchers for language students at the Bradford schools is being more and more appreciated—the record number of 730 having been issued so far during this school year.

Beyond the Box Office

The Central Film Library's Work

THE total audience for the Ministry of Information's non-theatrical film shows in the United Kingdom, between September 1941–August 1942, was 12 millions. The weekly audience has now risen to 350,000

This audience is reached in three ways:

(1) **Mobile Film Units.** During the year 1941–42 the mobile film units gave 38,000 shows to an audience of 6½ millions. There are now 130 units on the road, and they are giving 1,200 film shows a week. 124 of the units are 16 mm. and 37 of these are equipped with petrol generators to provide electricity where there is no mains supply. Six of them are 35 mm. units.
(2) **Shows in public cinemas.** In the year 1941–42 1,300 shows were given in cinemas out of ordinary cinema hours to a total audience of 900,000. Now 50

a week are being given, including a large number of training shows for Civil Defence and National Fire Service personnel.

(3) **Central Film Library loans to borrowers.** The Central Film Library with its sub-libraries in Scotland and the South-West Civil Defence Region in 1941–42 made 48,000 bookings of Ministry of Information films to 3,500 separate organisations with their own projectors. The audience reached by the loan of films was 4½ millions. The Library is now booking 1,500 Ministry of Information films a week to these borrowers.

The Central Film Library, London, also incorporates the pre-war libraries of films about the Overseas Empire and the United Kingdom, including the G.P.O. films. A further 40,000 bookings of these films were made in

1941-42, and 1,000 reels a week are now being sent out.

The film officers at the Ministry's Regional Offices are responsible for the shows given on the mobile units and in cinemas out of ordinary cinema hours. The facts and figures given in this report are a record of their work. They were set the target of 10 shows a week in each unit in operation, 38,000 shows were given, and this represents 92 per cent achievement of a possible maximum of 42,000 shows.

Factory Shows.

About one-third of the shows given each week are in factories, the majority of which have a show once a month. Another third are shows to village audiences, women's organisations and groups in small country towns. The aim is to give village shows regularly every two months. Shows for other Government departments of a more specialised kind, including training film shows to Civil Defence and National Fire Service personnel represent roughly another third. A large number of these shows are given in cities and urban districts. They are not organised on the same regular monthly and two monthly circuits as factory and village shows.

Shows in factories are usually given during the midday and midnight breaks, and cannot therefore contain more than two or three films, lasting in all about 25 minutes. For factory shows films are specially produced, which aim at relating the work done in factories to the achievements and problems of the fighting fronts. 35 mm. mobile units are now in use for the large factories so that as many as 3,000 workers can see the show at one time.

General shows in villages usually consist of five or six films, lasting in all about 80 minutes. The series of programmes are devised to give varied and coherent pictures of the war, both at home and on the fighting fronts and

in terms of this country, the Overseas Empire and the United Nations. Specialised films made for other Government departments are also included in these general programmes where they are needed to direct attention to special local problems.

Catering for Specialists

Instructional films for special audiences are made and distributed by the Ministry on behalf of other Government departments. During 1941-42 these films have included films for farmers on silage, ploughing, hedging, ditching, etc.; films for allotment holders and films about food; films on blood transfusion, diphtheria immunisation and accident prevention; training films for Civil Defence personnel, both part-time and full-time. Specialised films of this kind are usually shown together with other more general Ministry of Information films to make up a programme of about 80 minutes in length. Some of the films made on behalf of other Government departments are of such wide application that they are included in every possible programme. In this way, for example, the film *Fire Guard* was shown to more than two million people in six months.

In 1941-42, 49 films were produced and issued by the Ministry for non-theatrical showing only. A further 81 films were also used, some widely and some on occasions only; of these, 34 were films produced by the Ministry for cinema and overseas distribution; 16 were produced by Dominions Governments and the Government of India; 15 were produced by the American, Soviet and Polish Governments; and 16 films were acquired from commercial film companies and industrial concerns. Altogether there are now 332 films listed in the Ministry of Information catalogue issued by the Central Film Library, representing all the films produced since September 1940, which are now available.

News from Belgium

WE HAVE obtained some very interesting information out of Belgium which may well be typical of what is happening to the cinema industry in all Occupied Territories.

So far as Exhibition is concerned, our correspondent tells us, every cinema in Brussels is compelled to show at least 32 German-made feature films a year. They are shown with French or Flemish sub-titles. From the titles it is impossible to make out how many of them are direct propaganda. Though one or two are obviously set against a war background, the titles of the others seem to indicate that they are romances of the usual sugary German type. For instance *Theatre Queen* would seem to be a backstage drama; *Casanova Marries* is probably one of the more orgiastic U.F.A. products; *Grand Passion, Always Thine, Passport of Love, Oh! You Men, or The Immortal Heart* would seem to be pure escapism and bear out the information coming from inside Germany that one effect of war restrictions on the German character has been to provoke a wave of unbridled sexuality.

Other titles such as *U-Boat Westwards, S.O.S. 103, Alert at Post 3, or Comrades of the Sea* would seem to be propaganda for the might of Germany and the courage of her troops. There is also a group of 13 films labelled "propaganda" which are usually shown under the auspices of the local "cultural committees" free of charge. These boost the German Youth Movement, the anti-Jewish campaign, Germany's victorious armies, her air force and so on.

Five Italian-made films with French or Flemish sub-titles have filtered in and a certain number of pre-war French films such as *Remontons les*

Champs-Elysees, Le Roman d'un Tricheur, or Prison des Femmes, were still being shown at the time this information was smuggled out of the country. Titles of five recent French films are given but no other information. These are *L'Acrobate, Monsieur Coccinelle, Le Diamant Noir, Cartacalha, and Les Inconnus de la Maison*.

New Production

As to production, it appears that the Germans have followed their usual practice and "acquired" a controlling interest. This means that all the home output, judging from the titles, is strongly flavoured with pro-Nazi ideas. Two of the films, for example, deal with the good time had by volunteers for work in German factories. Another would seem to have a historical background. But it is not easy to make films in Belgium. This summer a film was being made on location somewhere near Courtrai. All the actors had to be imported from Germany because the Flemings who ought to have been the cast would not collaborate in "presenting subjects worthy of note in the production of European films, and persisted in remaining seated on the edge of the ditch!"

The Belgian industry has, of course, become a member of the International Film Organisation and is represented on its General Council, and also has its representatives on the various sub-committees, viz., renting, import and export, production and copyright.

This evidence corroborates that an effort is being made by the Germans to establish a European market based on Germany which in size and importance can challenge Hollywood's supremacy, and which cannot be shaken whether she win or lose. *Nous verrons ce que nous verrons!*

New Sprockets for Old

contributed by

C. W. BRETT, M.Inst.W.

Managing Director of Barimar Ltd.

EVERY PIECE of apparatus used in film production to projection is mechanically intricate and needs a very high engineering standard to manufacture.

Those engaged upon such work are much in demand for the development and manufacture of war supplies, consequently the maintenance and repair of privately owned equipment often presents serious difficulties, not only in getting the work done but also in securing replacements.

The value of welding

This problem is not peculiar to the film industry. Therefore a study of what others have done towards finding a satisfactory solution may perhaps be helpful, and show that similar methods can be adapted to other needs.

From the experience of my own business I would suggest that no other single aid approaches scientific welding in versatility and dependability. Unfortunately few people realise what tremendous strides have been made in this branch of engineering, which, some people still regard as being useful only for mending broken metal parts. This is far from the truth, for intensified research has produced several new processes; whilst operational technique is now reduced to a precision which leaves no doubt as to the perfection of the result.

One of the most recent developments, for example, is a process for uniting totally dissimilar metals. A year or so ago it was considered to be a notable achievement when a method was devised whereby cast or malleable iron could be welded to steel. Even

then most engineers considered it impracticable to go further if greater differences in the respective co-efficients of expansion were involved. This view has proved to be incorrect and the most divergent materials are now being welded together with consistent success: aluminium to steel to quote an extreme example.

Proof that a true weld is secured is afforded by tests to destruction which invariably cause the weaker parent metal to fail first, whilst the whole area of the weld remains unharmed. Work of this kind has opened up entirely new fields of opportunity not only for repair work, which was the primary objective, but in new construction where it is proving most useful, particularly for electrical and therefore for film work.

One of the greatest boons it confers at the present time, however, is the reliable manner in which worn components can be re-conditioned. New metal is welded upon the faulty areas, and followed by precision machining. Parts treated in this way are very often actually better than a replacement, which may cost ten times as much, if it is procurable at all.

Let 'em all come

A further impression that calls for emphatic removal is that such methods are all right for massive jobs such as a boiler, the broken crankshaft of an engine or a cylinder block which has been smashed to fragments, but that they do not apply to small precision-finished components.

One of the reasons for this false impression is that certain phases of welding are decidedly spectacular. For this reason it is an attractive subject to film for instructional or propaganda purposes. When the film unit arrives at a works naturally big jobs are favoured to the exclusion of the more delicate ones which are equally important although perhaps less showy in execution. For instance, it is possible to recondition film sprockets and even smaller parts. The value of being able

to do this is self-evident. Not only can home produced equipment be maintained in first-class condition, but also that of continental origin for which replacements the parent factories are naturally completely out of the question.

I apologise to your readers for blowing the trumpet of my own industry, but I do truly believe that we welders can keep their cameras—and projectors—turning!

FILM IN CZECHOSLOVAKIA

By Jiri Weiss

FILM IS the product of a highly complicated and precise industry. Cameras, film stock, development, printing and studio-technique, itself a highly skilled job, all demand almost scientific engineering precision. Therefore the more economically progressive a country, the better its film industry; and there is, of course, also a direct relation in the size of the home market of a country to the films it is capable of producing. In general, it should not be our aim to judge by isolated masterpieces which may be conditioned by various accidental causes, but by an average of productions seen in relation to their economic and social circumstances. Thus, in judging the Czechoslovak film, we must never for a moment forget the country which has produced it, with all its peculiarities of geographic, social, economic position.

Czechoslovakia was a medium sized country, half agricultural, half industrial. It had a well balanced economy, a strong export trade, a population of fifteen millions; its industrial skill meant a relatively high standard of civilisation. It had a good educational system, no illiteracy, a wealth of work-

ing class organisations. The breakdown of the Austro-Hungarian Empire in 1918 freed the latent powers of the young Czechoslovak middle-class; in twenty years, giant industries sprung up—Bata shoes, armaments, sugar, glass, textile and the rest. And as the Czechoslovak middle-class had had no time to alienate itself from the working population, as had happened in older countries, the nation was relatively homogeneous.

Many Cinemas

This, then, was the background of Czechoslovakia's film industry. A high cultural standard meant a high percentage of cinemas. There were 2,200 of them—the United Kingdom with three times the population had only about twice the number. On the other hand, a medium-sized country with a high export trade but without fixed markets, i.e. without colonies, cannot sell dear, cannot allow its population a very high living wage. The result was that cinema prices were proportionally much lower than in Britain, and this weakened the production power of the film industry. A film grossed about

7-800,000 crowns, and in some successful cases perhaps more than 1,000,000 crowns. This last sum is equivalent merely to £3,000—the cost of a documentary film in this country. If one considers that the cost of stock, cameras, lights, equipment, development, etc., were just the same over there as here in Britain, one can tell the degree of development that Czechoslovak technicians had to attain. The Czechoslovakian films which have been shown in this country, such as *Reka*, *Young Love*, *Janosik*, *Innocence*, etc., did not cost more than about £5-7,000. The strain during production in the Prague studios was terrible.

Quick Shooting

An average feature film in Britain is shot in five or six weeks. In Czechoslovakia, seven to eight working days was all the budget allowed; super-films were lucky enough to get 12 to 14 working days on the floor. Such quick work demands a high standard from all technicians, in spite of relatively low wages. As a result Czech cameramen became so famous throughout Europe, that sometimes three of them were working simultaneously in Britain.

The Czech industry was not, of course, able to satisfy the country's huge number of cinemas. The yearly production was about 40-45 full length films, produced mostly in the State-sponsored A-B Studios in Prague-Barrandov. The population was so film-minded—in Prague alone there were about 150 cinemas for three quarters of a million people—that foreign films were widely shown. The great American companies earned considerable profits and maintained large organisations. English, French and German films were shown with Czech or Slovak sub-titles; the public in this country dislikes this, but the Czech public was used to it and sub-titles became an acknowledged convention.

The success of foreign films was felt heavily by the Czech film industry, which tried many ways to stop the flood of foreign films swamping the country, or at least to exact a toll from every foreign film imported, as a subsidy to home production. Finally, after much haggling, a measure similar to the British Quota Act was adopted, with one notable addition: A National Film Board was set up, containing members of the Government as well as of the industry. The Board taxed the distribution of imported films and used the money for subsidy for good home-production. Thus, an obviously "commercial" comedy or thriller got no subsidy at all, while a film of national importance or artistic ambitions got a third of its cost covered by the Board, sometimes even with payment in advance, subject to approval of the script.

Research Work

A "Research-Studio" was set up and a "Film University" planned. The "Research-Studio" held a yearly competition for the best scenario; young actors were subsidised and introduced into the industry. The industry, of course, fought against this encroachment of State power against its interests. It tried to use the Board for its own ends, and as the struggle was still to be decided the political catastrophe of 1938 came. The film industry had its quislings, who tried to sell out their country before the fatal March, 1939. We saw them in the sad six months after Munich.

But in spite of difficulties and economic anarchy—similar to that of the film-producing France, Czechoslovakia had produced several outstanding films. Not that they were technical masterpieces—that was impossible in the cramped conditions I have described—but they had a dash and inventiveness which the industry in other countries often lacked. Take for instance such a film as *Hej Rup*, which has been widely shown in the Film

Societies of this country: Two young comedians, Voskovec and Werich, are playing two down-and-outs, roaming unemployed in the streets of industrial Bohemia. After many adventures they form a co-operative, which has a big fight with a millionaire named "Worst"; they win through after a breathless finish.

Idealistic Films

A later production, *The World is Ours*, 1937-38, went even further than that—showing a gangster organisation of "Grey Hats" set up and financed by the all-powerful Noël combine, which tries to set up Fascism in an imaginary country. Again, the two down-and-outs, helped by the common people, thwart these sinister intentions and Democracy triumphs. In spite of censorship—the original "Striped Shirts" had to be changed into "Grey Hats", and an intended showing of a general strike had to be cut out of the picture altogether—the film conveyed a feeling of much-needed optimism to a hard-pressed people. *Janosik*, an outstanding film by Mac Fric, has as its theme the adventures of a Slovak Robin Hood fighting for the people against the land-owners. *The White Scourge*, shown here under the title *Death and the Dictator*, and badly mauled by war-time censorship, was based on Capek's play and widely shown abroad.

An outstanding young director, Otokar Vavra, broke through in the last two years of Czechoslovakia's independence with *Innocence*, starring Lida Barova. The film, which was unfortunately badly cut by the British censorship and by commercial editing, has also been exhibited here. The language difficulty is great, because the British public doesn't like foreign films with sub-titles. The relative unpopu-

larity of French and Soviet films is proof of that.

The Hollywood star, Hedy Lamarr, it may be remembered, began her career in what was perhaps the best known Czech film of the thirties—Machaty's *Extase*. This film had two points of attraction: Cameraman Stallich's splendid photography and Miss Lamarr's naked charms. Since then, Miss Lamarr, who was called Kiesler in those days—has changed her name, and Machaty the director has also gone to Hollywood where he was last heard of directing a "B"-class picture, *Within the Law*, for M.G.M.

Changes to come

The Czechoslovak film industry was a reflection of the country from which it sprung: Young, vigorous, enterprising, but tied down by the limits of its size and a doomed social and economic system. The potentialities could not be exploited in a competitive system, which has ruined many a bigger film industry. A greedy and corrupt film oligarchy can never produce good films for the community: it will always go the line of the greatest profits. But just as the war has changed much in Britain—including the film industry—so there are bound to be great changes in the films of the Czechoslovakia to come. How great the changes will be, no one can tell; if they go far enough, the film can be taken for good out of the hands of the speculators in celluloid and human flesh, and can speak for the people; it may become an instrument of international understanding instead of international speculation. But this is a question which will be decided neither in Czechoslovakia, nor in this article.

AMERICAN LETTER

BY HERMAN G. WEINBERG

IT APPEARS that we shall have to wait until the post-war period for the film that will put this carnage on the screen with anything approaching the verve and sweep of *The Big Parade*, the terrible veracity of *Westfront 1918* and *The End of St. Petersburg*, or the tough poetry of *What Price Glory?* (stage version). Besides, war films produced in the mellow, retrospective years following a war, are inclined to be anti-war, anyway, so we've time for that aplenty.

Hollywood Fails

Meanwhile there's a job to be done and yet the way that job has been thus far reflected in the war films from Hollywood leaves much to be desired, for certainly the tragedy of refugees in the wake of invasion merits something more than *The Pied Piper*, for all its whimsy; the incredibly heroic stand of our marines at Wake Island merits, indeed, nothing less than a twentieth century Aeschylus, though Paramount's *Wake Island* is, perhaps, the best Hollywood war film thus far of World War II, while the welter of second-rate films about the Air Force appears more concerned with the technics of *echelon* formations, pretty panchromatic photography and equally pretty heroines, not to mention all too facile victories and "Rover Boy" heroics, to be convincing. And yet Hollywood is trying, valiantly, and the crop of war films promised for next season sounds most intriguing.

So now we do much better with spy films, like *Across the Pacific*, a penny-dreadful glossed up to look like something bizarre, but well enough done to be diverting; or *Casablanca*, a gin-soaked tale of refugees, agents and

counter-agents, who pivot around the *Cafe Americain* in a North African port waiting for their precious visas to Lisbon and New York. This one is an excellent example of the kind of film Hollywood, and Warner Brothers in particular, does extremely well. All the characters, as well as the situations in it, are stock, and you know how it's all going to turn out, but, despite the papier-mâché *Casablanca* (who, in Hollywood, has ever put the sultriness and heat of North Africa on the screen like von Sternberg did in *Morocco*?) and the clichés of casting, which give each character's destiny away, it manages, by virtue of some of its dialogue to be occasionally believable. Its humour is what really saves it, being a mixture of Central European irony of attack and racy Broadway-Hollywood Boulevard cynicism. It is also the first outspokenly anti-Vichy film, and it's about time. With *The Magnificent Ambersons* it shares the lonely top spot for the past quarter.

Orson Welles' Progress

The Magnificent Ambersons, Orson Welles' second film, was perhaps the best American film of 1942, just as his *Citizen Kane* was the best Hollywood film in 1941. He is no longer a boy wonder, but a mature artist, not yet one of the elect, but that will no doubt come after we have had the long-postponed opportunity to see his third film, *Journey into Fear*, which he is now re-cutting, and his fourth, the fabulous South American film about which we have heard so much. What makes Welles a greater director than Curtiz, who made *Casablanca*, is that Welles has style and Curtiz hasn't. In all the arts style is everything. If films

are an art, style will have to mean everything there, too. Otherwise films are no more than a good dinner, a "hot" date, or some such transitory pleasure. *The Magnificent Ambersons* shows in every foot of it that a brain was working behind the camera, every turn and twist of the plot is exploited to the hilt, new approaches are found to familiar situations, the camera looks and peers at everything with wonder. Here the story is really told in lights and shadows and for the first time, since I can recall, dialogue is used not as speeches and flip lines but as the fluid and fragmentary thing "dialogue" is in real life. I don't think the story was worth doing, being a lavender and old lace piece of the mauve decade, but as a framework to show that Welles has what it takes to make a screen burst into life, it certainly will do.

A Poor Selection

What does that leave us? *The Glass Key*, another mystery film of the hard-boiled type we do so well; *Yankee Doodle Dandy*, a sentimental nosegay tossed at the beloved figure of the late George M. Cohan; *Moon and Sixpence*, a valiant attempt to do something worth while, dissipated by the Hays office and a complete lack of anything remotely resembling style in a film that cried out for it; *Talk of the Town*, a brave attempt to decry intolerance and lynch-law as it still exists sporadically in America; *Tales of Manhattan*, Duvivier's futile attempt to repeat the miraculous formula of his *Carnet de Bal*—an impossible series of scenarios were against him and even the best Hollywood script writers appear to be no match for Zimmer, Spaak and Jeanson, with whom Duvivier collaborated in France. (Compare *Féfé le Moko* with *Casablanca* if you want to see how jejune Hollywood is with its much vaunted toughness.) *Road to Morocco*, with the funniest scene of the year, where Bob Hope tries to talk an Arab merchant out of some food by

pretending feeble-mindedness to gain his sympathy; and René Clair's *I Married a Witch*, which is no more like Clair than you are.

This Year's Production

For 1943 we shall have the Charles Boyer-Duvivier collaboration, *Flesh and Fantasy*; Capra's *Arsenic and Old Lace*; Welles' South American film, *It's All True*, as well as *Jangadeiros*, a documentary, and *Benito, the Bull*, which he did in Mexico after a scenario by Robert Flaherty; Disney's *Saludos*; a re-make of the Soviet *Girl from Leningrad*; Fritz Lang's film on Lidice and Heydrich, which he is doing with Bert Brecht; Steinbeck's *The Moon is Down*; Milestone's *Edge of Darkness* (these latter two on the invasion of Norway); Hemingway's *For Whom the Bell Tolls*; the Goldwyn-Lilian Hellman-Lewis Milestone film on the Russian campaign; Disney's 12 one-reel South American cartoons; Disney's *Victory Through Air Power*, from Major de Seversky's book (which has postponed *Peter Pan* and *Bongo*); Renoir's *This Land is Mine*, on the invasion of Belgium, in collaboration with Dudley Nichols; *Seven Roads to Cairo*, with Erich von Stroheim as Rommel; Hitchcock's *Shadow of Doubt*; Preston Sturges' film on the discovery of anaesthesia (now there's, perhaps, the least likely subject of a film for you, as a test for this most promising of our new directors!); still another by Disney, *The Gremlins*, which will be something for the boys of the R.A.F. to adore; *Quo Vadis* (of all things); *Flare Path*, by Terence Rattigan; *Highland Fling*, by Margaret Curtis; *Lady in the Dark*, with Ginger Rogers; *Mission to Moscow*, by our former ambassador to Russia, Davies.

Herbert Kline is doing another film in Mexico, a remake of the French film, *Otages*. Hans Richter is in New York, doing a new book on the films, lecturing at New York University, and preparing a feature-length history of

the development of the *avant-garde* film movement to its representations today in the modern documentary film, as well as mapping out a series of essay films that will blaze a new path for the expository film of the future. Jay Leyda's translation of Eisenstein's book, *The Film Sense*, has appeared and most welcome it is. Here is the grammar of film-making.

A trio of thoughts before closing for this quarter: (1) Re-seeing von Sternberg's *Morocco* recently, I felt that there has been no scene in a film since then that quite matched in bizarre quality the perverse humour of Dietrich's introduction, in top hat and

tails, in the Arab café, one of my all-time favourite scenes in films. (One has to go back to the bordello scene of von Stroheim's *Wedding March* to top it.) (2) The use of white swans in the Soviet film, *Peter I*, to deceive the eye into accepting the scene as one where the victorious soldiers of Peter are raping the captive peasant women is one of the cleverest bits of kinetic magic extant. (3) I should like to start a movement, which I hope will be taken up everywhere, for Disney to do the legend of Paul Bunyan, after the novel by James Stevens, as a feature-length film, after the war, as part of the fruits of victory.

The Film Strip

by Ernest J. Holmes, M.A., B.Sc.

Inspector of Schools, Hull Education Committee.

THERE is a gradually increasing awareness of the value of optical aids in the classroom, but it is rather surprising that practically the whole of this interest centres on the use of films. It is true that glass lantern slides are expensive to buy or to hire and that the selection available is not well organised and contains much material which is very much out of date. The same disadvantages do not attach to film strips which are very cheap and very easy to handle.

A film strip consists of a series of lantern slide pictures, the number usually ranging from thirty to fifty, printed on a piece of 35 mm. non-inflammable film. Practically all film strips so far produced have the pictures mounted vertically above one another, the normal size of picture being about one inch by seven-eighths of an inch. The British standards Institution, however, considered the matter in 1939 at the request of the Board of Education and have recom-

mended that film strips should be made so that the pictures are printed horizontally *along* the strip instead of vertically. The main advantage of this arrangement is that it is possible to print pictures up to a size of an inch-and-a-half by an inch and so get clearer definition on the screen. It does not appear that many film strips printed in this way are available yet commercially.

Special projectors are available for showing film strips; and since they use only a twelve volt projection lamp, they can be run from an accumulator and so be used in schools which are not equipped with mains electricity. Unfortunately these projectors are difficult to obtain at present and are rather expensive.

It is, however, quite possible to adapt an ordinary projection lantern, an epidiascope, or even a micro-projector, to show film strips by providing a special gate. Such a gate can easily be made of hard wood; it must

have a vertical slot 35 mm. wide, a hinged door for the insertion of the strip, and a rectangular hole large enough to take one picture to frame the picture. With a projection lens of about four inches focal length, it is possible to obtain a beautifully clear picture, some 3 ft. wide in an ordinary classroom or small hall. Using a high power projection lamp, it is possible to obtain a larger picture for showing to a large audience, but this gives rise to the danger of over-heating the film.

The Commercial Offerings

The film strips available commercially* include a few on nature study, a number on scientific subjects and a wide range in geography. The latter cover terms used in physical geography, the characteristics of the different climatic regions, different industries as well as film strips dealing with individual countries: since some of these last were not made primarily for school purposes, they are apt to concentrate rather on places of interest to tourists but, especially in geography, it is very easy to build up a collection of film strips which would be of great use in teaching. Such a collection would be quite cheap, too, since the cost of a film strip is less than a penny-farthing for each picture it contains.

It might be thought that children accustomed to the cinema would find little interest in the projection of still pictures, but experience shows that this is not the case. Nor do teachers scorn this simpler type of optical aid; and even schools where educational films are shown once a week find ample use for film strips too. The main advantage attaching to them is that each picture can be shown long enough for the teacher to discuss it adequately and for the pupils to absorb all they

*The name "Film Slide" is often used commercially to denote the strips. Actually, this name should be reserved for individual pictures made from 35mm. films.

need from it. Their extreme cheapness, too, means that the use of them is not limited to one showing as is usually the case with films, and it is possible for a class to see the pictures again after the teacher has given one or two other lessons based on the matter which they contain. Some material can only be handled by means of films but there is a wide field in which still projection is quite as effective as motion pictures. It has been suggested that an ideal combination would be a film and a film strip on the same subject, the latter made up of still pictures which showed the main points of the film. The strip could then be used as a preparation before the showing of the film and as a method of revision afterwards.

Portability

Compared with glass lantern slides, the outstanding advantage of film strips is their portability. The Hull Education Committee maintains a library of film strips, loaning them to individual schools for a week or fortnight at a time and finds it quite possible to send as many as half a dozen strips through the post in a single foolscap envelope. It has been suggested that it would be better for each teacher to make his own selection of pictures rather than use selections made by other people. This may be true; and, in the same way, it might be preferable for each teacher to write his own text books and make his own films.

Few teachers, however, have the time to do such work; and the best service which film strip producers can render is to make the best film strips they can and leave teachers to use them in the way that suits them best.

Judging from my own experience with film strips over the last ten years and the enthusiasms of other teachers who have used them, I feel quite certain that there is a considerable future for this type of optical aid, once it becomes widely enough known.

FILMS OF 1942

by Evelyn Russell.

"FILM-MAKING is not indigenous to the British. Why not leave it to the Americans and buy their best? We'll never beat them at their own game, so why try?"

So said a friend of mine some six months ago. My New Year's greeting card to him was a newspaper cutting quoting the American film pundits' awards for *In Which We Serve*. For the first time in film history an entirely British film has been voted "The Most Outstanding Film" of the year by "The National Board of Review of Motion Pictures" and just to show there is no doubt about it the "New York's Critics' Poll" has proved that decision to be true.

Newcomer Noel Coward

There is no need for me to enlarge upon the qualities of this remarkable production. It is a brilliant piece of work from start to finish; everyone concerned in the making of it deserves particular and separate credit. I am aware that one swallow does not make a summer, but it does usually herald a period of blossoming. For the sake of filmic art in this country, if for no other, Noel Coward must pursue his new interest.

Here are some of the other films considered by the judges.

Next of Kin, alas, is not one of them for this film was not sent to America (it may since have gone, but I think not). It is not for me to discuss the wisdom of the decision to deny to American audiences the opportunity of seeing so poignantly portrayed the result of careless talk, but the craftsmanship, direction and acting and casting in this film are more than admirable and Thorold Dickinson's is the credit.

But America *was* allowed to see

Michael Powell's *One of Our Aircraft is Missing* and deemed it worthy of very high commendation. The story was based on fact. Its photography is particularly good, the production straightforward and the acting utterly sincere. Wasn't it the first feature war film to have no love-interest in the accepted film sense? Maybe that is one of the reasons it remains in my memory. Sentiment replaced sentimentality and the dialogue is well-contrived. Pamela Brown's Dutch schoolmistress keeping the Englishmen at arm's length until she knows just what is to be done about them is a nice piece of acting.

British Realism

The story of *The Foreman Went to France* is also based on fact. Charles Frend has handled it expertly. A foreman did go to France and did bring back some special-purpose machines, and he might easily have been Clifford Evans. I suppose Gordon Jackson is another good young actor to be absorbed in the serious prosecution of the war, but he will be remembered for his performance—his first in films, I understand—as a British Tommy.

Talking of British Tommies, *Wavell's 30,000* should not be allowed to sink into obscurity. It was admirably made by the Crown Film Unit and is an important documentary in that it records war in Libya, details of which cannot be so adequately covered by word pictures, and which folks at home should know about.

Folks at home should also know something of what "blockading Germany" really means. This aspect of the war was well-covered in *The Big Blockade*, an excellent propaganda documentary in dramatic form directed

by Charles Frend. Frank Cellier's characterisation of the German business man and Will Hay and Bernard Miles as mate and skipper explaining navicerts at once come to my mind.

No one could deny the sincerity of *Coastal Command*, which sought to do for that command what *Target for Tonight* did for Bomber Command. Yet in spite of its magnificent photography, for which we are indebted to Jonas Jones, its impressive music by Vaughan Williams so skilfully used by director J. B. Holmes and its first-class sound recording by Ken Cameron, there is not the same suspense and genuine excitement. It is, however, most interesting as a record of the work of that section of the Air Force which does not, perhaps, in the course of its duties have assigned to it the jobs with much likelihood of immediate drama.

Fighter Command has not yet been recorded, but *The First of the Few* undoubtedly paves the way. Here is the story of the man, R. J. Mitchell, who gave his life to perfect the aeroplane from which the first Spitfire came into being. Leslie Howard portrays the inventor most sensitively and sincerely and has covered the fifteen or so material years of his life with sympathy and understanding. The lighting and photography are memorable and the flying sequences unusually effective.

Cagney wins

The best flying war-film from America is undoubtedly *Captains of the Clouds*, superbly made in technicolour with some fine acting from James Cagney, Brenda Marshall and a splendid supporting cast. It is spoilt by its last sequences in which what purports to be a Messerschmitt attacks a formation of bombers making for England. A little different handling of this situation might have prevented the titter that greeted it on the two occasions on which I saw this film. A curious lapse at the end of an otherwise carefully produced film.

I suppose it is the meticulous attention to detail in every sense that makes *The Young Mr. Pitt* one of the best films of the year. Period detail is so very easily overlooked but I could find no fault with this production. Its dramatic appeal is strong, and under the very able direction of Carol Reed, Twentieth Century-Fox have contrived to make film history with an historical film.

We can make history but we certainly cannot make comedy. There has been nothing from British studios to compare, in even a small way, with *Ball of Fire*, *To Be or Not To Be*, or *My Favourite Blonde*. We have no Barbara Stanwyck, Carole Lombard, Bob Hope or Madeleine Carroll; we have no Garbo who in *Two-faced Woman* with Melvyn Douglas caused a riot in more senses than one; we have no Bing Crosby to walk in step with Bob Hope and Dorothy Lamour down *The Road to Morocco*. All these we lack but more so do we lack dialogue writers, on whom so much of the success of comedy depends. I say we lack them but it is my opinion that they are to be found if only those responsible in the film industry in this country would seek them out.

American Comedies

Until then, we must give our friends across the Atlantic best—in the making of comedies. We shall have to give them best, too, in regard to "thrillers". The best of our own bunch—*Alibi* and *Suspected Person*, do not compare with *Johnny Eager*, *Grand Central Murder*, or *Kid Glove Killer*, in all of which Van Heflin proves himself so finished an artist. Then there are John Huston's terrific *Maltese Falcon* and *Across the Pacific*. These two films have uncovered to a discerning and appreciative public one, Sidney Greenstreet, who is a superb artist even without the touch of genius in Huston's direction of camera angles and lighting. Humphrey Bogart, and Mary

Astor with this arch-villain Greenstreet form a trio worth preserving with great care, to be used only with sufficient frequency to continue to whet the appetite and not stale the palate.

New Stars

By which thought I am reminded of Teresa Wright. I noticed her first in *The Little Foxes*, in which Bette Davis played so devilishly well. As Mrs. Miniver's daughter-in-law she more than justified my opinion of her capabilities, and as Mrs. Lou Gehrig in *The Pride of the Yankees* her performance equalled in quality that of Gary Cooper who was as good as can be.

"As good as can be" is the epithet I would apply to Thomas Mitchell. Think of him in *Out of the Fog*—a simple old man fishing in the harbour, the hobby by means of which he causes the timely end of a blackmailer, in *Joan of Paris*—a priest helping escapees, in *This Above All*—the corporal friend of a deserter and in *Moon-tide* as a blackmailer. Every performance impeccable.

It was interesting to see Jean Gabin, starred in this latter film, giving so fine a performance though working in a new language and with new methods, and I look forward to his next appearance.

Not only do I look forward to, I await anxiously the next appearance of one, Otto Preminger, an actor quite unknown to me until I saw *Pied Piper*. He is quite brilliant as the German Commandant in the last sequences of the film, which film, I must admit, in spite of the fact that I enjoyed enormously Nevil Shute's book with the same title, is an admirable production. Irving Pichel has directed the children with an insight and understanding to be wondered at. They are just children—and that is an accomplishment,

to be sure, in the film world; there is any amount of true sentiment but, strange as it may seem, no sentimentality.

The year had its quota of unusual films. *Hellzapoppin* for example, or *All that Money Can Buy*. In this category however, *Thunder Rock*, made over here, is outstanding. The young Boulting brothers took a chance, and have succeeded in making an admirable film from Robert Ardrey's play, giving it an added breath and clarity of purpose.

By and large, 1942 was an interesting year in the world of film-making, and would seem to suggest that quality is beginning to matter more than quantity. Will 1943 show that only the best is good enough?

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Organised Film Going

THE Nottingham Y.W.C.A. and Y.M.C.A. Youth Clubs have formed a Film Review Circle as the outcome of a suggestion by the members of the Club. One day discussion was in progress concerning activities for our winter programme and a member put forward the idea of "organised" film-going.

As in other club activities, it was necessary to define the purpose or aim of the circle, which we decided was "To put that very important aspect of adolescent social life—film going—on a sound basis, and to encourage the practice of criticism and selection so that we may be helped to acquire the knowledge of what makes a good picture and vice-versa".

A Film Circle

Up to date we have held eight meetings of the Circle and its popularity has in nowise decreased. At the first meeting we elected a chairman and secretary, and decided upon a method of running the project. We decided to visit the cinema at one meeting—having first decided which cinema was showing the most interesting film—and on the second, discuss the merits or demerits from roughly four angles, moral of the story, acting, production and any special angle of the film.

We have visited four films—*Reap the Wild Wind*, *The Foreman Went to France*, *Let the People Sing*, and *First of the Few*. Upwards of sixty members attended the shows and it is worthy to mention that at one cinema we were granted a reduction of 50 per cent in the price of admission.

Talks, discussions and short films have been given at our other meetings. The film and theatre reporter of a local newspaper spoke to us on the subject of "Twenty years of theatre

and cinema in Nottingham". Two officials of the Nottingham Scientific Films Society have addressed us on "The value of Scientific films in education". Group discussions have been quite fruitful, such questions as "Do films in any way help to solve social problems?" "What part would you like to see films play in the system of education?" and "Do you consider films to be purely an escape from every-day life?" "What type of picture do you prefer to see?"—have brought forth some very interesting and enlightening comments.

Future Plans

Our plans for the future are broader and more ambitious—up to date our movements have been cautious and tentative. We have been anxious to prove that our venture would be successful, now that this is an established fact, and its importance evident, we intend to be more enterprising and experimental in our programme.

We have enlisted the aid of the British Film Institute who can give us both suggestions and practical help, and we intend to explore any other organisations who are concerned with films and the cinema. The Ministry of Information Film Department we consider to be our potential allies. The Central Film Library is a prospective source of supply when the time comes that we can hold our own shows.

We are firmly convinced that the effect of picture-going on the society—especially youthful society—cannot be over emphasised and we therefore intend to acquire the amount of knowledge which is necessary to make that effect good.

Any other organisation or individual who can offer suggestions or help in the formation of our future programme

is asked to do so, and if any Youth Organisation hold a Film Review Circle, we should be very glad to exchange correspondence with them and share any beneficial experiences that come our way.

Difficulties

The major difficulties that have confronted us in this undertaking have been two. The first—with the exception of one cinema which has been most sympathetic towards our circle and has helped us considerably—is that we do not seem to be able to interest those directly engaged in the film industry. We find cinema managers, on the whole, rather refractory gentlemen, who are unwilling to help us by even allowing the Circle to reserve seats in their cinema. We hope that this state can be remedied. It would add very much to the prestige of the circle if we were permitted—as the only organised Film Club in the vicinity—to reserve a block of seats.

Our second difficulty—which is possibly largely due to war conditions, is that we are unable to hire a talkie projector. Our scope, from the educational point of view, is definitely hampered by silent films as these need an introductory talk and often require the knowledge and background of an expert on the particular subject.

With these exceptions, we feel encouraged to proceed on the same lines (but developing as the time is ripe) and it is our earnest intention to remain active and virile, and to take an intelligent interest in what is an increasingly important activity of society.

In the future we have to plan a little on the same lines as before, e.g., Discussion, Debates, experienced speakers to talk on the specialised branches of film development and production.

If we are successful in getting hold of a talkie projector half our battle will be over, for we should hire such films as would benefit and increase the knowledge of our circle members, not only on the scientific side of film development, e.g., how films are made on the set, the history of films and the growth of the cinema, etc., but also we would start a series of instructional films suitable to our interests as a youth section in the community, e.g., biology, geography, especially travel films, current and world affairs, physical education, films of interest in showing social problems, historical and architectural films, hygiene, public health and domestic science, etc.

On the other hand, if we cannot get a projector, we shall not allow this to interfere in our progress. Our present system has worked well and we can develop this further, obtaining more outside help from speakers for subjects closely allied to films.

Possibly a Library

As yet we have not attempted to build up a library of books, but this idea may prove a very fruitful sphere for sound theoretical training.

On the subject of visiting films, here of course we are very much in the hand of the cinema managers as to the choice of films made, but we are fortunate in this city in having at our disposal cinemas which do show a good standard of film, and not always "box office successes".

Although this is a new venture and we are working in a small way, we can claim that our circle has now definite views on the standard and type of films it wishes to visit. As we become better equipped with knowledge in this branch of film life, together with sound theory and scientific knowledge, we shall develop on more educational lines, suiting our syllabus to the young cinema-goer!

THE SCHOOL FILM'S FUTURE

by E. R. YARHAM, F.R.G.S.

A YEAR or two back Professor Lancelot Hogben, F.R.S., Regius Professor of History at Aberdeen University, said: "If the cost of one cruiser were applied to providing projectors for our schools, and the expense of two battleships were devoted to the production of films for the teaching of science, this generation would witness a greater advance of human enlightenment than the world has yet seen."

Possibly Professor Hogben's statement was somewhat hyperbolic, but there is an immense amount of truth in it, and it does not redound much to our credit that we have permitted even the Fascists and the Nazis to outstrip us in the adoption of this vital new educational medium. Germany was notably progressive, Italy also had an ambitious programme of development, and as well the United States, Sweden, France, Czechoslovakia, and Russia were making far wider use of films than this country.

What Germany did

The Reich Department for Educational Films was formed in the summer of 1934, soon after Hitler gained power. Its ambitious Film Plan programme aimed at supplying all Germany's 60,000 educational institutions (from village school to technical high school) with the necessary apparatus for film teaching over a period of five years. Ten thousand were installed the first year, but very probably the concentration of effort upon preparations for war may have slowed up the programme. In any case it was not complete in 1939. The financial side of the scheme is interesting, a good point

being that it encouraged the children to feel they had a stake in the matter. Each child, with the exception of those of unemployed fathers, had to pay about twopence every three months. The money was collected and pooled and passed to the Film Department, which acted as a central bureau for the work of planning the films and paying for them. Twenty-three provincial centres and 800 municipal bureaux were formed.

In the past many barriers blocked the progress of the film as an educational medium here. One was a vicious circle: the industry held back from making educational films because of the shortage of schools, institutions, and other bodies equipped to show them; educational authorities were only lukewarm in their support of the development and held back from installing apparatus because of the lack of suitable films to show. Manifestly an absurd position.

Confidence wanted

Many teachers also lacked the confidence and competence to handle projection apparatus, but a more serious factor was the want of knowledge as to the teaching methods required by the new medium. Even where a teacher was enthusiastic he often found an insuperable barrier in the fact that the school was not equipped for projection, and in other cases the best results were not obtained from a projector because methods of distribution of films and material were badly organised.

In some areas nevertheless local initiative had managed to overcome

some of these difficulties. In England a number of School Film Societies were formed, which assisted teachers by issuing lists of recommended films. Some of the secondary and higher educational schools also had their own Film Societies. Scotland established the Scottish Educational Film Association with a membership of about 5,000. Such local advances are encouraging, but far more could be done if the whole country were mobilised, as is advocated by the British Film Institute, and local bodies (Regional Film Libraries and Film Groups), established all co-ordinated by a Central Institute and Library.

Films will never be able to supersede the teacher, whose personality counts for much, yet it is difficult to find a subject which does not offer opportunities for teaching by film. In such subjects as languages the film could play a prominent rôle. Botany, natural history, and geography can be invested with an interest and beauty impossible to convey by word of mouth alone. Slow-motion photography brings rapid movements within the eye's power of analysis, useful in physical training, crafts, technical processes and some biology subjects. Experiments have proved too that sound films are a remarkable medium for stimulating backward children. They arouse a desire for knowledge which is dormant—to say non-existent is wrong—in children of this type.

Production Methods

With regard to the films themselves, the experience of the past 20 years proves that children's films cannot be thrown off as a by-product of the commercial industry. The teaching film must be inevitably produced for schoolroom use. As to interest films, one which interests an adult is not necessarily the best for a child even though it possesses some educational value. Children's films are in a class by themselves, and need special know-

ledge of the child mind, special material and experts to supervise them at every point in their development, such as officials of the proposed Central Institute. From the bare script onwards they ought to be designed for the demands and interests of the child mind.

Seven Points

Current opinion in the United States, France, Italy and elsewhere shows that the following points ought to be borne in mind from the pedagogical point of view when teaching films—as opposed to interest films—are produced: (a) the film must be coherently planned; the various steps in its development must be logical and in order; (b) it should be short, and aim at conveying one main lesson; (c) all essentials to a proper understanding of the main theme must be included, and irrelevancies, however interesting, ruthlessly excluded; (d) the commentary must be carefully prepared in simple language; it should anticipate the picture where necessary, and call attention to salient features by such phrases as "You will notice now . . ."; (e) "talking down" and cheaply humorous touches must be scrupulously avoided; (f) repetition of essential action in the film is strongly recommended—"Let us look at that again," "Notice especially this time . . ."; (g) films should be correlated with recognised courses of study, and those relating to the subject should have a definite sequence of pedagogical relationship to each other.

It may be that before we reach this ideal the State will have to give more direct help, as in Sweden, where the Government has sponsored over 500 educational films. Bearing on this, one hopes that one of the features of the more peaceful world towards which we are looking forward will be closer educational co-operation among the nations, with international exchange of films.

Joseph Reeves Reports on The Workers' Film Association

IN 1938, the Trades Union Congress and the Labour Party, believing that visual propaganda on behalf of the social ideals for which they stood had a great future, decided to form an organisation charged with the task of using this medium to the full. The Workers' Film Association was the result.

The first year of work revealed the need for and the value of propaganda and education by the film in a manner which surprised even the promoters. Nine films were made, a small library of films installed and sound projectors sold which made an actual trading profit of £250. The war came and high hopes were dashed to the ground. But it was decided to carry on even if only with a nucleus staff.

The Corner Turned

When Soviet Russia came into the war in 1941, a great change occurred. The W.F.A. were entrusted with the distribution of the great majority of sub-standard sound films, prepared by the Soviet Government for distribution in this country. This meant a piece of hasty improvisation. The W.F.A. was reorganised to distribute and exhibit films and with the registration of the Association as a Co-operative Society, its future looked far more rosy. By the end of 1942, after one full year's working, the annual balance sheet revealed a surplus of nearly £1,000. The parent bodies were amazed and gratified.

During the year, the Czechoslovak, Chinese, Polish and Norwegian Governments entrusted the W.F.A. with the distribution of their films, and, to its library, were added films from the Film Department of the London Co-

operative Society, the five London Co-operative Societies, the Woodcraft Folk, the Co-operative Wholesale Society Ltd., and Paole Zion. The Association was also entrusted with the exclusive distribution of *Our Film*, made co-operatively by the film workers at Denham Studios.

A Film School was held at Oxford for one week, at which sixty students attended, and other week-end film schools, conferences and special film exhibitions were arranged. At the same time mobile outfits were set up to travel from place to place showing films as required by workers' organisations, and during the year nearly 550 such shows were given directly under the auspices of the Association, which included a series of conferences arranged by the Trades Union Congress.

A Wide Distribution

The catalogue of films published by the Association now includes over 600 films, and a branch library has been established in Scotland. Altogether 13,672 reels were distributed.

The National Association of Co-operative Education Committees and the Scottish Co-operative Wholesale Society are now in full membership as partners in the Association, forming a federation of national federations, registered on a non-profit-making basis, for the use of visual aids to illustrate the important task of placing the workers' social aspirations on the screen. In this connection a series of short films have been ordered by a number of co-operative societies including a proposal for a film which can best be described as "Labour on the March".

News from the Societies

THE BRITISH FILM INSTITUTE

The ninth annual general meeting of the British Film Institute was held on January 7th, 1943. Sir William Brass took the chair and there was a good turn out of members many of whom had come early to see examples of the most recent additions to the National Film Library's Loan Collection being screened in the Institute's private theatre.

The annual report and balance sheet were carried unanimously, and several members took the opportunity of paying personal tribute to the value of the services which the Institute had rendered them. In introducing the Report Sir William Brass called attention to the need for the Institute to continue to press for the continued consideration of optical aids by the education authorities of the country, as he was convinced that because of the use made of them by the Services after the war there would be a tremendous development in their use. He also referred to the excellent work of the National Film Library.

The Governors were unsuccessful in getting Mr. Bernard Gillett a further period of release from the R.A.F. to continue to be their outside travelling educational representative. Steps are now being taken to find somebody else willing and able to carry on his work.

The Education Panel has adopted two more lists of films on which new educational series should be made. One deals with Simple Harmonic Motion and the other with Meteorology. There is also in the press their new pamphlet on *The Technique of Using Films in the Classroom*. The text was largely written by Mr. Gillett and all the illustrations were prepared by him. The pamphlet will be a companion volume to the Institute's previous best sellers, *Choosing School Projectors* and *Using School Projectors*.

The Governors announce a week-end conference on The Film in National Life, to be held at the University College of the South-West, Exeter, from Friday, April 2nd, till Monday, April 5th. Full particulars and programme can be had on application to the British Film Institute, 4 Great Russell Street, London, W.C.1

NATIONAL FILM LIBRARY

Two Cities Films have generously presented to the National Film Library for preservation a master soft lavender print of Noel Coward's *In Which We Serve*. Warner Bros. have kindly presented copies of *Sea Wolf* and *Strawberry Blonde*, and A.B.P.C. a copy of *The Blue Angel*, which was rescued from the junk merchants by a matter of hours. By the courtesy of the owner, the Library has been able to have copies made of *Gladstone's Funeral* (1898) and of *King George V and his Cabinet* (? 1918). There has also been acquired a copy of Pathé's three-reel *Life of Christ* (1912), one of the earliest features to be made.

The special vaults at Aston Clinton are to have certain modifications so as to render them as near as is humanly possible proof against fire and incendiary bombs. A special hood over the gas escape vent has had to be designed.

The National Film Library Committee is giving consideration to the whole question of preservation. Within a few years all the present site will have been built over and even the careful precautions which are taken now are not good enough for really permanent preservation. Thought is therefore being given to future policy and to the design of the perfect vault, and as to how films shall be chosen for perpetual as opposed to long term preservation under the best conditions possible at a reasonable cost.

A new edition of the Loan Section Catalogue has been prepared and published (6d.). It contains details of the new films recently added from the London Film Society Collection as well as of over 100 others. All the films in the collection were chosen for their use for film appreciation and to illustrate the development of the art of the cinema. The bookings are now double what they were twelve months ago so greatly has interest grown in the subject.

SCOTTISH FILM COUNCIL

The departure of our Secretary, Mr. Russell Borland, to the Services is going to mean a very severe blow to non-theatrical cinema development in Scotland in general and to the work of the Scottish Film Council and the Scottish Central Film Library in particular. The remarkable progress that has been made in Scotland in

this field has been in no small measure due to his very efficient work, and at a time when staffing problems everywhere are acute, to remove a key person of Mr. Borland's type is undoubtedly going to prove a very great handicap indeed.

In the meantime, however, the Council have decided to carry on and at least keep the flag flying until a more favourable opportunity arises for further development. How necessary is this decision has been emphasised by the tremendous demands made on the Scottish Central Film Library throughout the past few weeks. The phenomenal development of this library, as emphasised in the report submitted to the Carnegie Institute by its Director, has been one of the outstanding developments in Scottish cinema circles in the war years. This development still continues and actually at the moment it is becoming an embarrassment. The feature of the last few weeks has not been the number of bookings the Library has been able to undertake but the huge number of bookings that the Library has been unable to cater for. Christmas has always been a busy season with the Scottish Central Film Library, but never more so than this season when churches, schools, voluntary organisations and the Services vied with each other in the intensity of their demand for films.

Outside of the Library activities probably the most interesting part of the Council's work has been the work of its Sound Investigation Committee. Several interesting almost startling discoveries have been made as a result of a series of investigations carried out by this body, and will shortly be published.

The associated bodies linked to the Council are all having a very successful and busy season. Indeed there has been, to a certain extent, a resurgence into the activities of several of these bodies. All of them report keen and enthusiastic membership with members at least maintaining their position.

FILM COUNCIL OF THE SOUTH-WEST

The first half of this season has been a busy one. The Film Council is coming to be recognised more and more in the locality as a focus of film activity and bodies such as A.R.P., Red Cross, etc., come to us for their shows, thus the Film Council contributes to the national effort. Frequent enquiries concerning educational, technical and other aspects of the film are received and dealt with. Thus the Film Council functions as a Regional Information Bureau in embryo, ready to expand into something fuller when conditions allow. The experiment of collaborat-

ing with the Devon and Exeter Film Society has justified itself. An entirely passive Sunday afternoon show has given place to a critically active Wednesday evening show in which members have sharpened each others' wits and taught each other the rudiments of film appreciation. This is a very promising start for the new phase in the life of the Film Society and was only made possible by the support of the Film Council.

FILM LIBRARY OF THE SOUTH-WEST

The Ministry of Information Regional Film Library at Dartington has entered upon its second year. In the four months ending December 31st, 1942, 2,819 reels were distributed, as compared with 895 reels in the same period a year ago. Films are now going out at a rate of about 200 a week, over 230 projectors being served.

The Film Library of the South-West has also improved its so far somewhat disappointing circulation. Some new films of the Petroleum Films Bureau have been a most useful addition.

MERSEYSIDE FILM INSTITUTE SOCIETY

On November 24th and December 17th special performances of films of interest and educational value were given to over 5,600 technical and secondary school children. At one of the December performances, the Lord Mayor of Liverpool, Alderman R. Duncan French, attended and addressed the children.

The Society starts the New Year optimistically and has issued a special pamphlet called "M.F.I.S.—What it is and What it does", explaining the Society's activities. Film shows have been arranged for January, February, and March, the Russian film *The New Teacher* on January 16th and the French film *Ignace* on February 16th. The choice of film for the March show, provisionally fixed for March 16th, has not yet been made.

MANCHESTER FILM INSTITUTE SOCIETY

Despite decreased support, the Society has continued the joint film shows with the Manchester and Salford Film Society. A successful winter session has just been completed. We showed *Les Gens du Voyage*, *The Bright Path* and *La Femme du Boulanger* as feature films, and *Soviet Scrapbook*, *This is Colour*, and *The Harvest Shall Come* among the shorts. A sub-standard show of scientific films arranged with the British Council and the Association of Scientific Workers was also very successful. A spring session of joint shows is projected when it is hoped to have *The New Teacher*, *The Strange Victor* and *Volga Volga* as features.

BELFAST FILM INSTITUTE SOCIETY

Wartime upheavals made it doubtful at first if the number of membership subscriptions to Northern Ireland's only Film Society would amount to the necessary minimum to make this year's season possible. A financial guarantee was, however, put up by members of the committee, and this gesture has been happily justified so far by the attendances at shows. As the continued success of the season depends largely on the number of guest tickets sold, visitors are doubly welcome.

For financial reasons the Society has had to forsake the comfort of a suburban cinema on Saturday afternoons, and, as Sunday shows are still impossible in Belfast, it has returned to the austerity of the Grosvenor Hall, its first home, for a series of monthly Wednesday evening performances.

The first programme on November 18, an entertaining essay in styles of comedy, was excellently received: Guitry's *Remontons les Champs-Élysées* was the feature, supported by Benchley's *How to Eat* and Disney's *Donald's Lucky Day*.

On December 16 *We From Kronstadt*, impressive and timely, was shown supported by *Russian Salad* and a Pinschewer colour cartoon. On January 6th Belfast saw Renoir's *La Grande Illusion*, with *Rainbow Dance* and Rotha's *A Few Ounces a Day* as soufflé.

Next on the list are a revival of *The Testament of Dr Mabuse*, *The New Teacher*, *Quai des Brumes*, *Film and Reality*, and, it is hoped, *Le Dernier Tournant*, with a variety of supporting shorts including some from the London Film Society collection now available, from the British Film Institute's National Film Library.

The Society's monthly bulletin and film guide is being published regularly. Enquiries should be addressed to Miss Myfanwy Hammond, 56 Ulsterville Avenue, or Alfred Arnold, 6 College Green House, Belfast.

IRISH FILM SOCIETY

During the summer months a great deal of activity took place in Irish Film Society circles. A propaganda film *Campa*, for the Catholic Boy Scouts of Ireland, was made by a unit drawn from our Film School.

The preliminary work of the Children's Committee culminated in a public meeting in Dublin's Mansion House on September 16th, when Oliver Bell was the principal speaker. He outlined the two different branches—educational and entertainment—that such a committee would have to handle.

An appeal was made to teachers, many of whom came forward and volunteered to work on this important problem. Various groups have been formed to handle the obtaining of prospectus, the compilation of a suitable film library and the making of educational films.

When the ordinary shows opened on October 10th, the Society had reached a peak membership of 720. Our feature films so far have included *Le Roi S'Amuse*, *Les Bas Fonds*, and *The New Teacher*. Feature films for the rest of the year are *The Film and Reality*, *The Last Laugh*, *La Marseillaise*, *The Rich Bride*, *Kermesse Héroïque*, and one extra-special show.

The Film School has just closed after its first session. Its syllabus includes lectures on scenario by Geoffrey Dalton, former Irish correspondent of *Cinema Quarterly*, lectures on exposure, the camera and general aspects of the cinema, by the Secretary, Liam O'Laoghaire, and some technical lectures on optics, electricity, chemistry of development, and the mechanics of sound reproduction have also been arranged.

A further development is a general course on film appreciation. Again the formal lectures are by Dalton and O'Laoghaire, but in addition outside lecturers who have knowledge of the film business have been invited to contribute to our programmes.

"Question Times" and Brains Trust items also figure on the programme.

With the largest membership since the Society opened, things look very well for the future.

CAMBRIDGE UNIVERSITY FILM SOCIETY

Despite the persistent reduction in numbers of undergraduates, the Society opened its third season at the beginning of the Michaelmas Term. Three shows were given in the Arts Theatre, made available through the courtesy of the Trustees, at which the main films were *We from Kronstadt*, *My Universities* and *Crime et Châtiment*. Other films shown so far this season have included *The City*, *The Harvest Shall Come*, and the beginning of a series of showings of early films, including the National Film Library's *Life of Charles Peace*. During the Lent Term at least two substandard showings of early classics will be given, in addition to the normal shows in the Arts Theatre. Garson Kanin's *A Man to Remember* is being revived, and there is to be a programme composed of early Chaplin and W. C. Fields pictures.

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THE FILM SOCIETY OF AYRSHIRE

The first half of the season of twelve performances ended at the turn of the year with a continental double feature programme of Marcel Pagnon's *Merlusse*, and the gay *Tales from Vienna Woods*. Prior to this the Society screened its most hotly debated film, *The Rich Bride*. Opinions were very sharply divided between sheer rubbish badly photographed and Utopian propaganda fantasy. For the fourth performance the English version of *Unfinished Symphony* had rather a mixed reception, but *Fredlos*, which was on the same programme, created a very fine impression indeed and many members have been asking why it has taken six years for Ayrshire to show this film. Following the booking of I.C.I.'s delightful *This is Colour*, the Society decided to devote an entire evening to colour in the cinema. The idea was successful, and in addition to *The Thief of Bagdad* and *This is Colour*, in Technicolour, examples of Gasparcolour, Harmonicolour, Dufaycolour and Dascalor were shown.

The problems of keeping the flag of the film society movement flying in wartime have been numerous in Ayrshire, where membership is over a wide area, and from time to time throughout the season the Society has had to make alterations to suit civil regulations. Despite the enforced alterations, however, the Society is having quite a successful season as regards membership, and a highly successful season in the matter of pleasing the members. At least part of this success can be placed to the credit of the Council, which decided, after reviewing the foreign films shown in the past seven years, that it would be good policy to select films of the calibre of *The Spirit of the People*, *The Ghost Goes West*, *Storm in a Teacup*, *Our Town*, *All that Money Can Buy*, and *Three Faces West*. This policy is holding the Society well together in difficult times, and it has been backed up by well-selected shorts and the new documentary films of Britain and America.

EDINBURGH FILM GUILD

For the first time, the Edinburgh Film Guild has been permitted by the local magistrates this season to run performances in both the afternoon and evening: the result has been a membership of about 1,000, which is likely to increase once the evening arrangement becomes better known.

Programmes given so far have included pre-war films crowded out at the time of their production (*Tales from the Vienna Woods* and *Ernte*), and new Soviet productions (*The New Teacher* and *A Musical*

Story). *L'Esclave Blanche*, one of the last French importations, has been shown, and it is hoped to show *Ramuntcho* or *Derriere la Facade* before the end of the season.

When *Film and Reality* was shown Cavalcanti was present and addressed the members—at both performances. Documentaries have included *The Harvest Shall Come*, *Power and the Land*, *Man the Enigma*, and *Memories of Europe*; a programme of Norwegian films included *Giant of Norway*, *All for Norway*, and *Men of Norway*; a programme of musical films (with *A Musical Story*) included *In der Nacht*, *The Gay Parisian*, *C.E.M.A.*, and *Swiss Symphony*; and short experimental work has included *This is Colour*, *An Optical Poem*, and *Filling the Gap*.

The Sunday performances have been supplemented with two mid-week performances of 16 mm. films, one programme being on the theme of "Films of the United Nations" and the other "The Film in the Social Scene".

Future plans include a special American programme with *Our Town* as the feature, and a 16 mm. programme of Soviet films, including excerpts from the silent epics in the National Film Library. In general the Film Guild, now in its thirteenth season, is full of life and shows no sign of losing its spirit of enterprise.

ABERDEEN FILM SOCIETY

The Society's membership has now reached the satisfactory total of 500, and at every performance there has been an excellent audience. There has been a good deal of healthy criticism, as well as appreciation of the programmes provided. More than ever this season members are bringing friends along. This bodes well for an increase in membership. Men and women in uniform continue to take advantage of their special concessions.

The performance on November 8th coincided with the anniversary of the Russian Revolution, so it was deemed appropriate to show *Lenin in October*, which, if not viewed with pleasure by all the audience, was certainly received with great interest. On December 6th *Tales from the Vienna Woods* was the feature film. *This is Colour* however, aroused more interest and gave more delight although the gaiety of the Viennese scenes and Strauss' music were considered charming.

The first performance of the New Year took place on January 3rd, when what was perhaps the best programme to date was shown, the films being *L'Esclave Blanche* and the altogether delightful *Russian Salad*. For the next performance *A Musical Story* has been selected as the feature.

COLWYN BAY

The New Film Society recently formed in Colwyn Bay, whose president is Dame Sybil Thorndike, already has well over 700 members, and proposes to give a season of seven performances this winter. The first was held on Sunday, December 13th, 1942, when *La Kermesse Héroïque* was enthusiastically received by a large audience. At the next the Russian film *The Bright Path* and *The Gay Parisian*, the technicolour film of the Ballet Russe de Monte Carlo, will be shown. Programmes for the remaining performances of the season include *Maskerade*, *The River*, and *Quai des Brumes*.

The Society has arranged to distribute 150 guest tickets for each performance to members of H.M. Forces. The local military authorities have expressed their appreciation of this act.

THE GIRL GUIDES ASSOCIATION

The Ranger Pre-Service Training film, *For this Our Heritage*, about which we wrote in the last number of SIGHT AND SOUND, has proved very popular. Copies of it have been taken by the Central Film Library, and are to be circulated by the Ministry of Information film units to suitable audiences. The film was shown recently to Mr. Butler and other members of the Board of Education, and a request has now been received from the Board for a copy to be shown to H.M. Inspectors.

All the other films in the Headquarters Library are booked up several months ahead, and extra copies have had to be made to meet the demand.

YOUTH HOSTELS ASSOCIATION

The Youth Hostels Association reports that there is constant demand for its three films, all of which are of a documentary nature. Their titles are *Youth Hails Adventure* and *The Magic Shilling*. Both of these are silent and run for over an hour. The third is also silent but is a short and is entitled *Yostling*.

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